



## FIRST THINGS FIRST

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**AGENDA ITEM:** Regional Council Member Annual Survey and Professional Development Survey

**BACKGROUND:** The Regional Council Member Annual Survey was released in July for all regional council members serving in SFY10. The purpose of the survey is to hear from our Regional Council members about their experience and the work accomplished by their Regional Councils. The survey looks at the Regional Councils' achievements, challenges, and barriers and provides staff with a better understanding of how we can provide support.

The second survey, completed in August by Regional Council members, was an education, training and professional development survey. Regional Council members were asked to identify the best methods for providing training and educational opportunities and the topics most desired for training.

Summaries for both surveys are included for review.

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## **Regional Partnership Council Member**

### **Survey Results**

August 2010

This is the second annual survey completed by Regional Council members. Overall, the results of the survey were very positive. There were no survey questions that received more negative than positive responses with all rated responses being greater than 63% “strongly agreeing or mostly agreeing”. This is an improvement from 57% on the 2009 survey.

The survey shows some clear areas of strengths and other areas for improvement. One of the great strengths, as identified throughout the survey, are the Regional Coordinators and the great job they are doing to support the Regional Councils. According to responses, meetings and agendas are well planned, communication is good, information is accurate, staff is responsive to questions and requests for information, and the Regional Councils’ experience with funding plans is very positive.

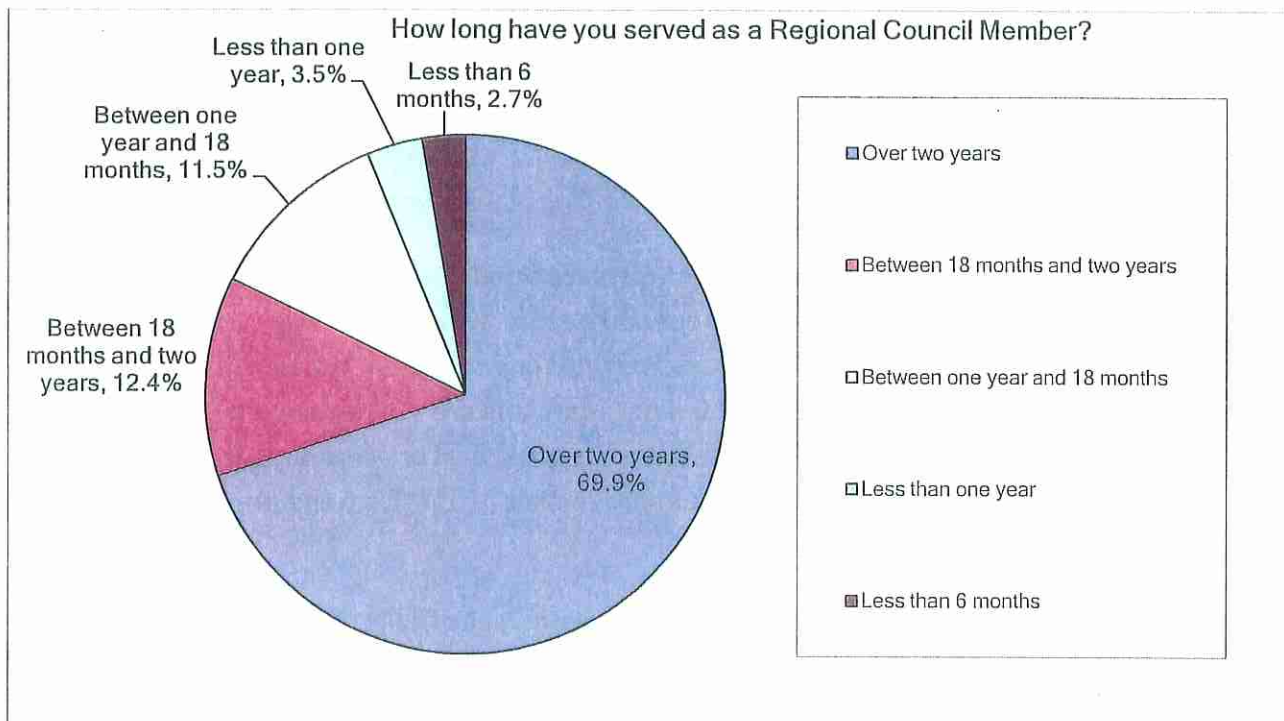
From the previous year’s results, Regional Council Members reported that much more activity is occurring in the regions to advance early childhood development and health. From networking outside First Things First meetings to participating in other community partnerships and seeing an increase in community attendance at Regional Council meetings, Regional Council Members are actively engaged and working in their regions. In addition, Over 75% responded that there is a great deal or some support for investing in early childhood development and health, which is an improvement of 11% from the previous year’s survey.

The opportunities for improvement are related to work processes, specifically the RFGA process. The ratings and comments suggest that the process needs to be streamlined. Timely information and data about the grants awarded was a repeated need. Also, communications and community outreach need improvement. Members reported that the community is not aware of First Things First and this needs to remain a priority.

The open ended questions at the end of the survey provided for great feedback and the themes are summarized in this report. With over 80 comments for each question, additional time will be needed to analyze and report on the findings. In summary, conflict of interest, open meeting law, and the ability to maintain a quorum were identified as areas impacting the Regional Councils ability to conduct their work effectively. Overwhelmingly, the comments were statements of thanks and gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of First Things First and make a difference for children.

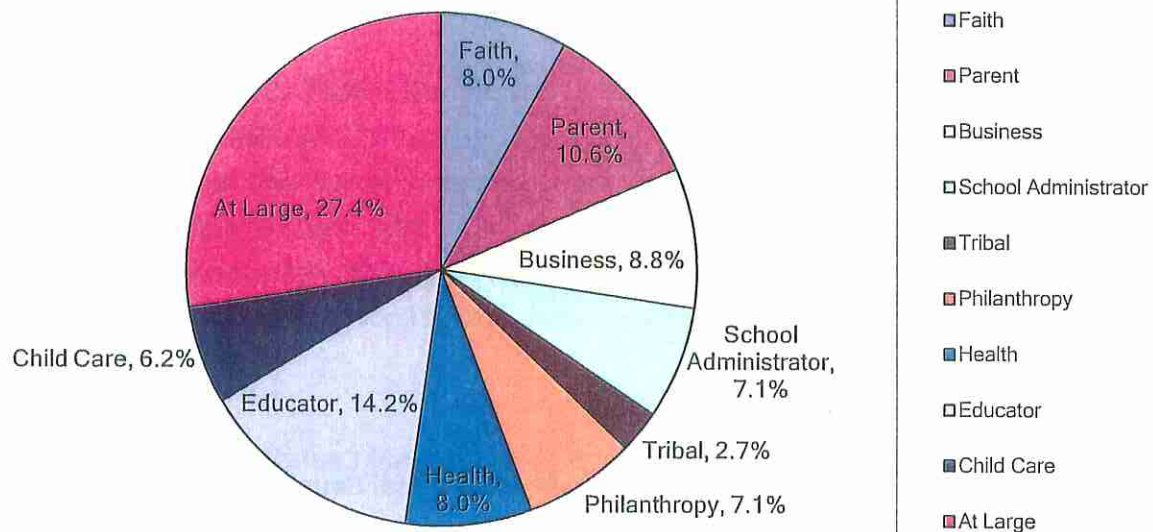
## RESPONDANTS

There were 115 respondents representing 37% of the Regional Council positions filled, which was a decrease of 27.8% from the 2009 survey. Of the respondents, the majority, 69.9%, represented Regional Council members with more than two years experience. The respondents were an equal representation of the various roles for the Regional Councils, as well as represented the regional areas. As would be expected the at-large positions that make up 3 of the 11 positions had the largest number of respondents or 27.4%. The remainder of respondents was relatively even except for the Tribal Representative seat, which was significantly lower at 2.7%. This was expected because there are only Tribal Representatives for those Regional Councils in which a Tribe participates.

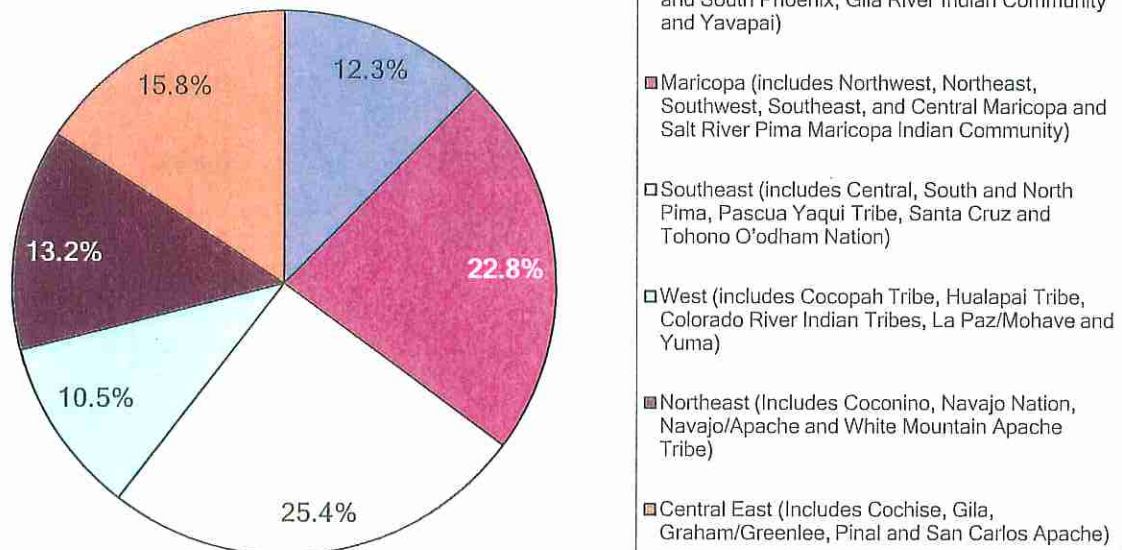




### What position do you hold on your Regional Council?



### In what regional area do you serve?



### **FTF STAFF PERFORMANCE**

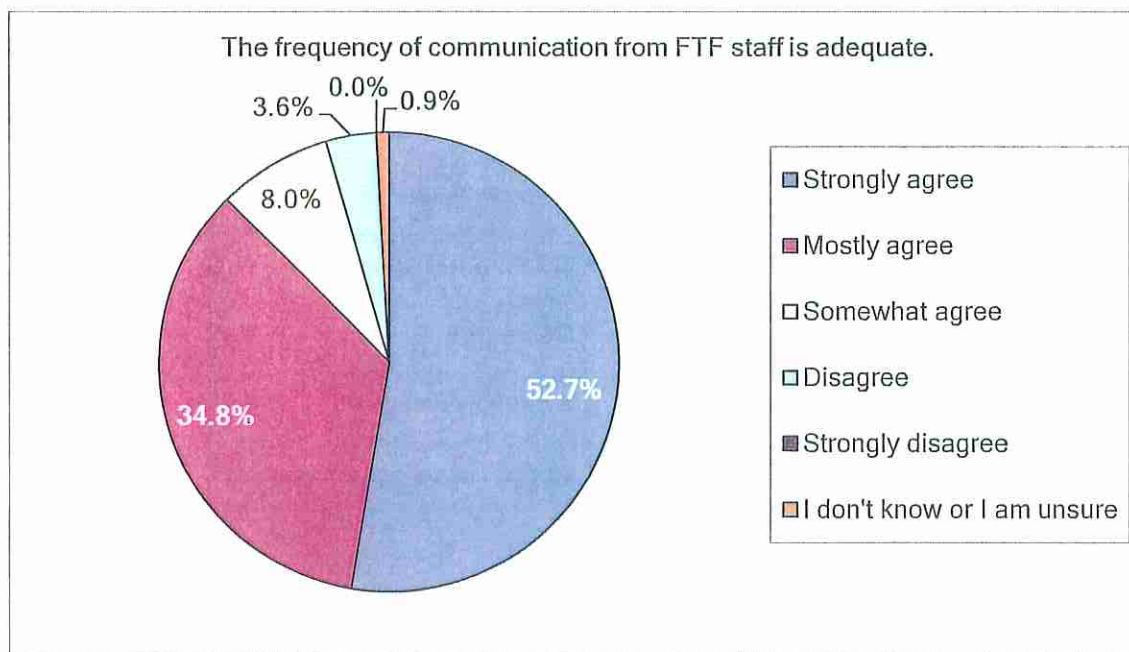
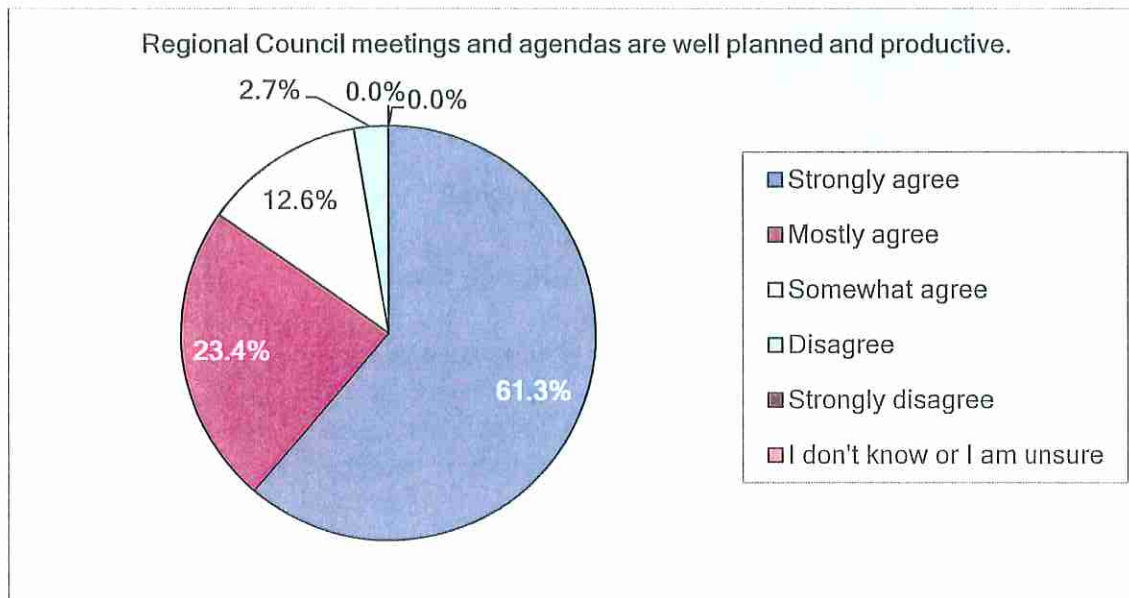
Questions 4 and 5 of the survey evaluated the effectiveness of the FTF Staff. Overwhelming, the Regional Council members' believe that their Regional Coordinator is excellent to work with as reflected in their response of over 91%. The comments section reflected high regard for Regional Coordinators and the work they do for the Regional Councils. Working with other staff fared positive across the teams of Finance, Communications, Evaluation, Policy, and Administration, although 25% of the respondents selected "I don't know or I am unsure".

**First Things First staff is excellent to work with in my role as Regional Council Member .**

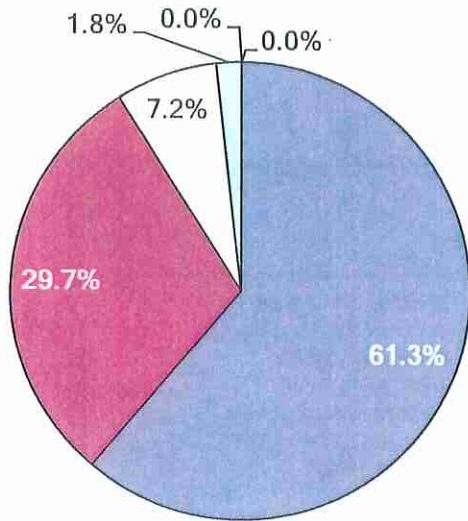
	<b>Strongly or Mostly Agree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Regional Coordinator</b>	<b>91.8%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>
<b>Finance</b>	<b>65.1%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>
<b>Communications</b>	<b>48.2%</b>	<b>0.06%</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>53.6%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>
<b>Policy</b>	<b>58.7%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>75.5%</b>	<b>0.01%</b>

## EXPERIENCES WITH MEETINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Questions 6 through 9 of the survey evaluated the meetings and communication with Regional Councils. Respondents felt that meetings and agendas were well planned and productive with 84.7% “strongly agreeing or mostly agreeing”. Additionally, they felt that staff were responsive to questions and requests, that information received is accurate, and the frequency of communication is adequate.

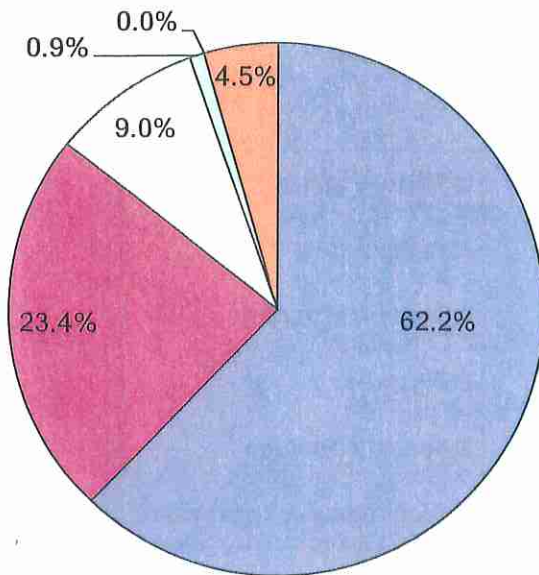


The information I receive from FTF staff is accurate.



- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know or I am unsure

FTF staff is responsive to my questions and requests for information.



- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know or I am unsure



### ***BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT***

Questions 10 and 11 addressed Regional Councils' perceptions of their progress in building strong community relationships. Overall, the members reported that support for early childhood development and health has increased in their regions since the last survey. More outreach is also occurring in the regions. Over 75% responded that there is a "great deal or some support" for investing in early childhood development and health, which is an improvement of 11% from the previous year's survey.

**In your region, how much public support is there for investing in early childhood development and health?**

**Great Deal or  
Some Support**

**No support**

**77.3%**

**7.2%**

**How has your Regional Council been involved in developing relationships within the community to advance early childhood development and health for children birth through five?**

<b>Community Attendance at Meetings</b>	<b>73.0%</b>
<b>Community Forums</b>	<b>55.9%</b>
<b>Networking</b>	<b>72.1%</b>
<b>Community Partnerships</b>	<b>66.7%</b>
<b>Meetings with Government Officials</b>	<b>48.6%</b>
<b>Presentations</b>	<b>57.7%</b>
<b>Tours of Programs and Services</b>	<b>43.2%</b>

### ***FUNDING PLANS***

The following questions focused on Regional Council members' satisfaction with the Funding Plan, RFGA, and grant renewal process. Nearly 80% of respondents favorably viewed developing their SFY2011 funding plan.

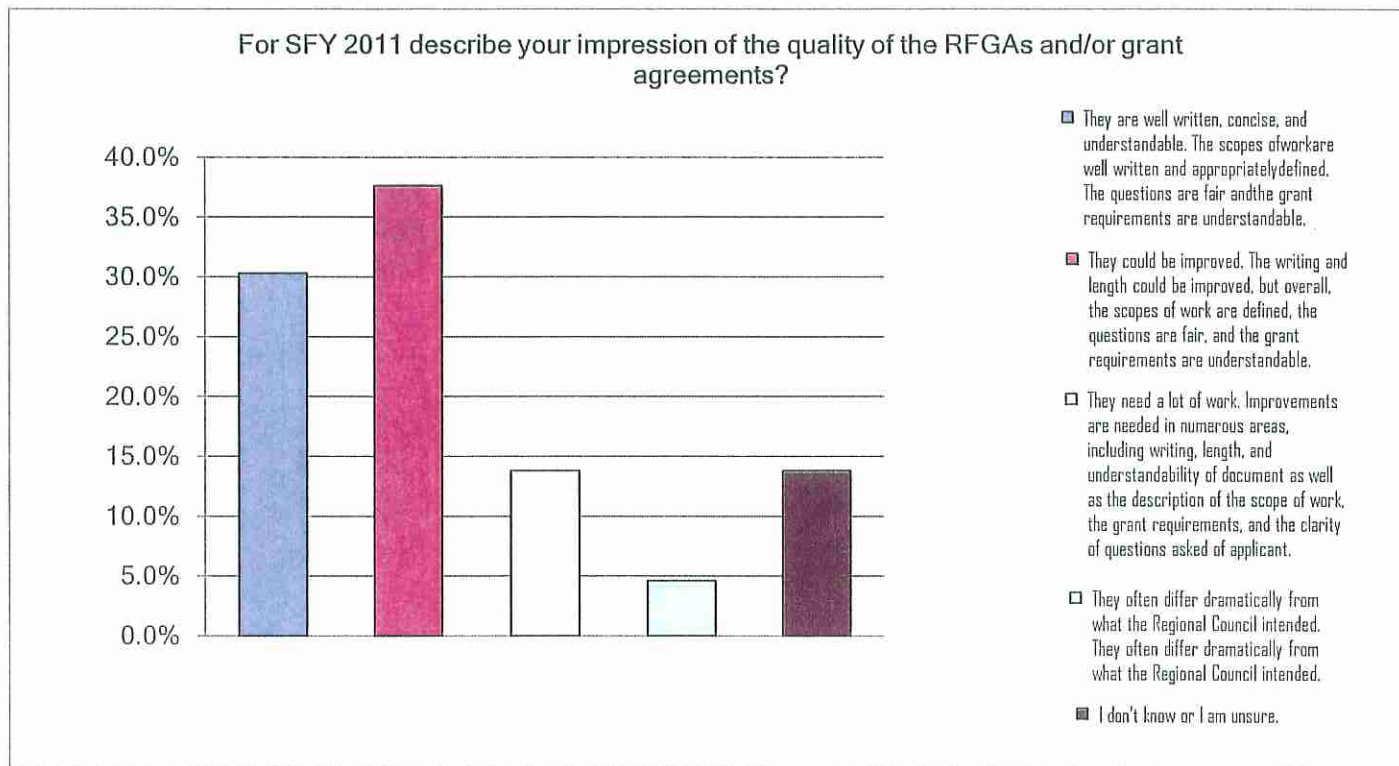
	<b>Strongly Agree or Mostly Agree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>My experience in developing our Region's State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2011 funding plan was positive.</b>	<b>77.3%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>

### **FUNDING PROCESS (RFGA AND GRANT RENEWALS)**

The subject with the most negative response was the RFGA process. Nearly 70% of Regional Council members responded positively regarding their satisfaction with the development of the RFGAs and they felt that they met the intention of the Regional Councils. While 7% reported they were not satisfied, this is a decrease in the negative responses by almost 5% from the previous year. The respondents were satisfied with the process for reviewing and recommending grant applications for funding for their Regional Councils, which is unchanged from 2009, however, the number of respondents who felt negatively about the process increased by 5%. The process for approving recommendations for grant awards saw a slight improvement over 2009 but almost 13% of respondents reported having concerns about the award recommendations which is an increase over last year's results. Satisfaction with the grant process timeframe had a 63% positive rating, which was improved over 2009 by 6% and the negative responses decreased by 8%. The comments reflected that the grant process is challenging for small organizations, the amount of paperwork to complete for the RFGA is overwhelming and the timeline is very long. In addition, capacity in rural and tribal communities for organizations to implement the strategies of the Regional Councils was reported as a major concern.

	<b>Strongly Agree or Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree or Disagree</b>
<b>For SFY2011 I was satisfied with the development of the RFGAs for my Regional Council and they met the intent of the Regional Council.</b>	<b>69.6%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>
<b>For SFY 2011 I was satisfied with the process for reviewing and recommending grant applications for funding to Regional Partnership Councils.</b>	<b>73.4%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>
<b>For SFY 2011 I was satisfied with the RFGA/grant agreement awards process, including Regional Council approval of applicants recommended by review committees and board approval of Regional Council recommendations for funding</b>	<b>70.6%</b>	<b>12.9%</b>
<b>For SFY 2011 I was satisfied with the timeframe in which grant awards were made and programs were implemented in my Region.</b>	<b>63.1%</b>	<b>10.8%</b>

The Regional Councils' positive impression of the quality of RFGAs and/or grant agreements was 67.9% stating that the grants were well written or could be improved, but nearly 2 out of 10 stated that they needed a lot of work and/or differed dramatically from the Regional Council's intentions. The quality of RFGAs is clearly an area for improvement though the negative responses decreased by 10% over the previous year's survey, which was rated at 28%. Other considerations are the high percentage of members who responded I do not know or I am unsure suggesting a need for more information.



The grant renewal process satisfaction ratings were similar to other ratings related to the RFGA process, as were the negative responses. Seventy percent of the members were satisfied with the process and almost 70% felt they had the necessary information to make well informed decisions of whether to continue or discontinue grant agreements. Since this is the first year for grant renewals, there are no previous statistics in which to compare.

	Strongly Agree or Mostly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
<b>18. For SFY 2011 I was satisfied with the grant renewal process for my Regional Council.</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>
<b>19. I had the necessary information for the SFY 2011 grant renewal process to make a decision to continue or discontinue the grant.</b>	<b>69.1%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>



### **SYSTEM BUILDING**

Questions 20 and 21 related to understanding the connection with funding plans, grants, and how they relate to outcomes, as well as understanding the early childhood system. The responses strongly indicate that members understand the connection with 93% “strongly or mostly agreeing”. In addition, respondents felt that they have a strong understanding of the early childhood system and how they can partner with local and state providers to develop strategies. Question 22 related to the work of the Arizona Early Childhood Taskforce. A strong positive response from Regional Council members of 90% suggests that they stayed up-to-date on the work of the taskforce. Only 4.5% stated they were not familiar with the work of the taskforce.

	<b>Strongly Agree or Mostly Agree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>20. I understand the connection with funding plans and grants and how they relate to outcomes.</b>	<b>91.9%</b>	<b>0.09%</b>
<b>21. I understand the Early Childhood system and how my Regional Council can develop strategies and funding that partner with local and state providers to make a difference for children.</b>	<b>91.1%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>

### **BOARD FUNCTIONING**

This question addressed the perceptions of the Regional Council members regarding the functioning of the Board. Eighty-seven percent, as compared to 80%, last year reported that they are satisfied with how the Board is setting the strategic direction. Over 70% of respondents, as compared to 67% last year, are satisfied with the formulation and communication of policy decisions. Almost 80% of members reported that they believe the Board respects local needs and decision making as compared to 65% last year.

<b>I am satisfied with the following aspects of the First Things First Board.</b>	<b>Strongly or Mostly Agree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Setting the strategic direction of First Things First</b>	<b>87.4%</b>	<b>0.91%</b>
<b>Formulating and communicating policy decisions at a state level</b>	<b>73.0%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
<b>Respecting local needs and decision making</b>	<b>78.4%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>



## **OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS—MAJOR THEMES**

### **How has your Regional Council functioned: What has worked best?**

- Good, open, and honest communication and collaboration
- Subcommittees, study sessions, and workgroups
- Diversity of experience and expertise of Regional Council members
- Effective staff and Regional Coordinator

### **How has your Regional Council functioned: What has been the biggest challenge?**

- Open meeting law
- Conflict of interest
- Maintaining a quorum
- Awareness of FTF in the community
- For the Board and staff to recognize and understand that the rural areas having different needs than urban areas
- Vacant regional council seats
- Timely and accurate data about the grant awards

### **What has made it possible for your Regional Council to connect with the community and develop relationships?**

- Regional Coordinators are networking in the regions, developing relationships, and attending events
- Networking by Regional Council members who have various connections and relationships in the community
- Community partnerships

### **What have you learned through your participation in the Regional Council that would help other Regional Councils as they move forward with their work?**

- It takes a lot of dedication, hard work, teamwork, collaboration and communication
- Need common goals for the children
- Need everyone's input
- Respect for all and everyone's opinion
- It's a process

### **What changes are needed, if any, to improve the process for awarding and renewing grants?**

A summary of the major points represented in the written responses were:

- Streamline the process and the paperwork needed, shorter timeframes for approval, simplification of the process
- Assistance and methods to support smaller organizations and agencies to write and apply for grants and to be competitive
- Training and technical assistance for organizations awarded grants and agreements

### **Do you have recommendations for the State Board about how best to work with local Regional Partnership Councils?**

- Communicate more
- Visit the regions and attend Regional Council meetings
- Understand that regions are different, they have different needs.
- Community awareness for FTF throughout the state





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**REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY  
INITIAL RESULTS**

September 30, 2010

The results of the first Professional Development Survey provided a wealth of information that will be used to develop a comprehensive leadership, education and training plan for the Regional Partnership Councils. There were 130 respondents, which represented about 46% of the Regional Council member positions filled. More than half of the respondents have served as a Regional Council member for more than two years, and nearly 20% were new members. The respondents reflected a balanced distribution of the membership seats, and there was a fairly balanced representation of the regional areas.

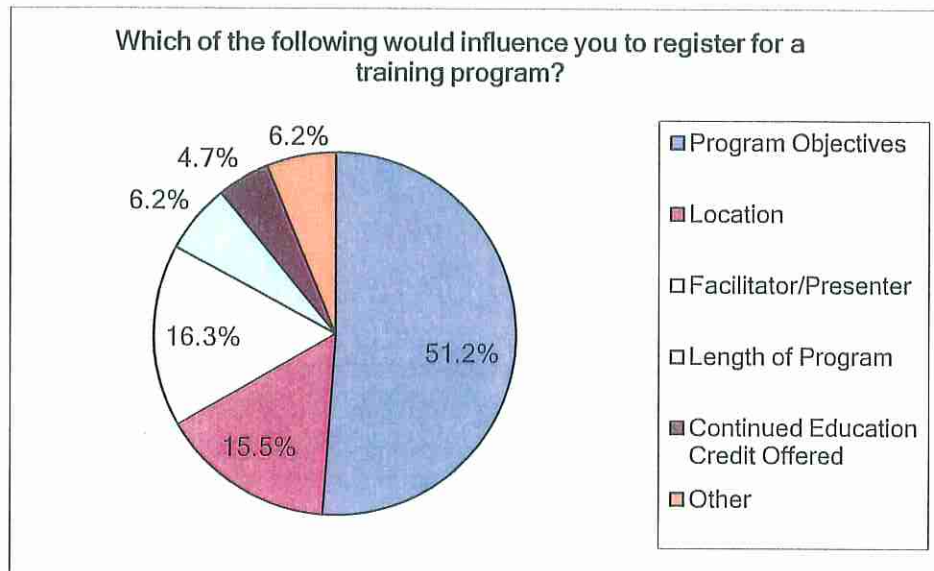
***TRAINING DELIVERY, TOOLS AND RESOURCES***

For delivering professional development opportunities, the results showed a **strong interest in regional conferences 56.7% and webinars at 41.5%**. Continuing to hold an annual summit, providing scholarships for Regional Council members to attend regional and state conferences, and conducting webinars would provide a solid foundation for a professional development program.

	Strong Interest	Some Interest	Little or No Interest
A state conference	34%	46%	13%
A regional conference	56%	36%	7%
Webinars	41%	49%	18%
Live Meetings/Teleconference	36%	47%	17%
Internet self-paced	33%	36%	30%
Video	19%	44%	36%
Discussion/Forum	39%	48%	12%
Classroom live led in your regions	39%	47%	13%

## TRAINING SCHEDULE

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 93%, are willing to travel if needed in order to access training opportunities. Regarding convenient days and times for training, there was a fairly balanced distribution of days of the week and times during the day with **Thursday** being the most convenient day, and **mornings and afternoons** being the most convenient time of day. The majority of respondents felt that training should be offered **quarterly** and when asked what would influence you to register for training, the half of the respondents reported **program objectives**.



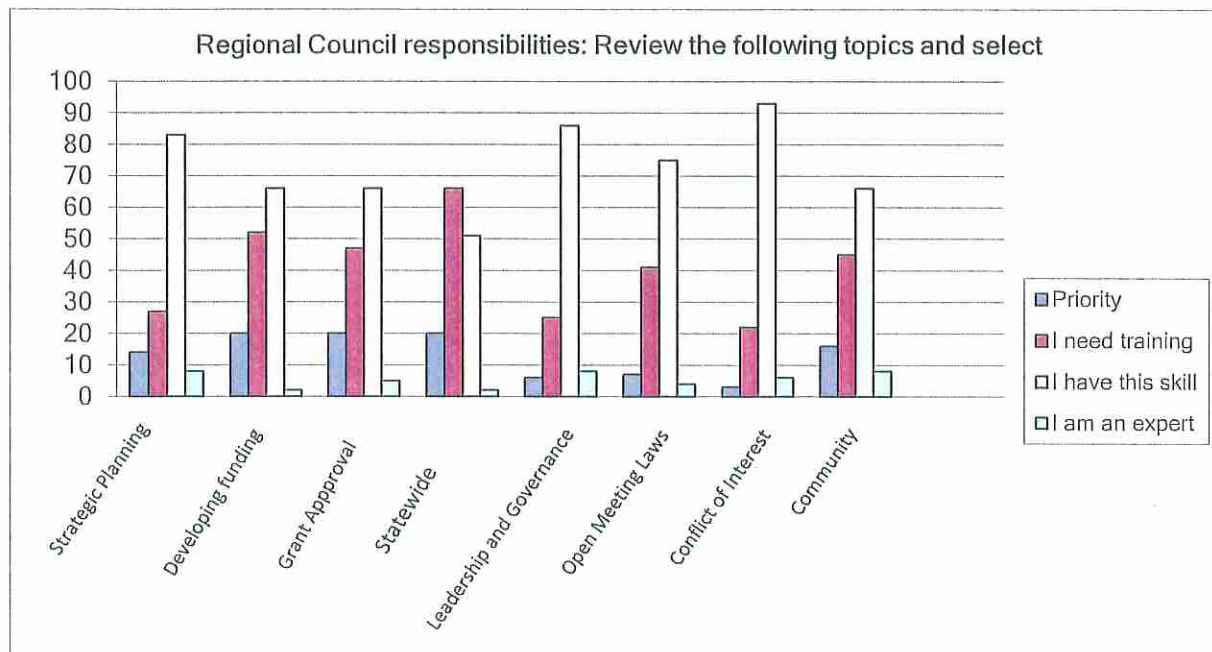


## SELF-ASSESSED SKILL AREAS AND TRAINING NEEDS

### Question 9: Regional Council Responsibilities

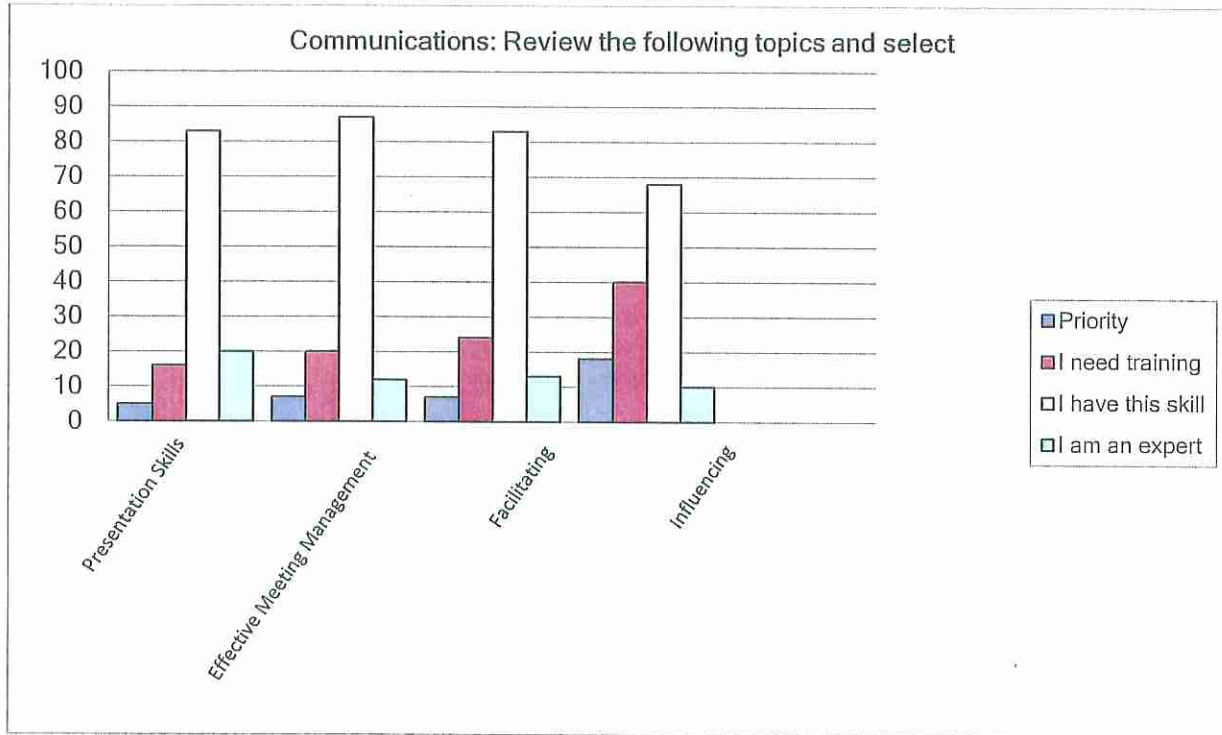
The topics with most interest for increased training were Statewide Initiatives and Developing Funding Plans.

- **Statewide Initiatives** was selected by a majority of respondents as a training priority at 54.1%.
- **Developing Funding Plans** 42.6%,
- **Grant Approval Process** 38.8% and
- **Community Development** 38.3% were strong needs as well



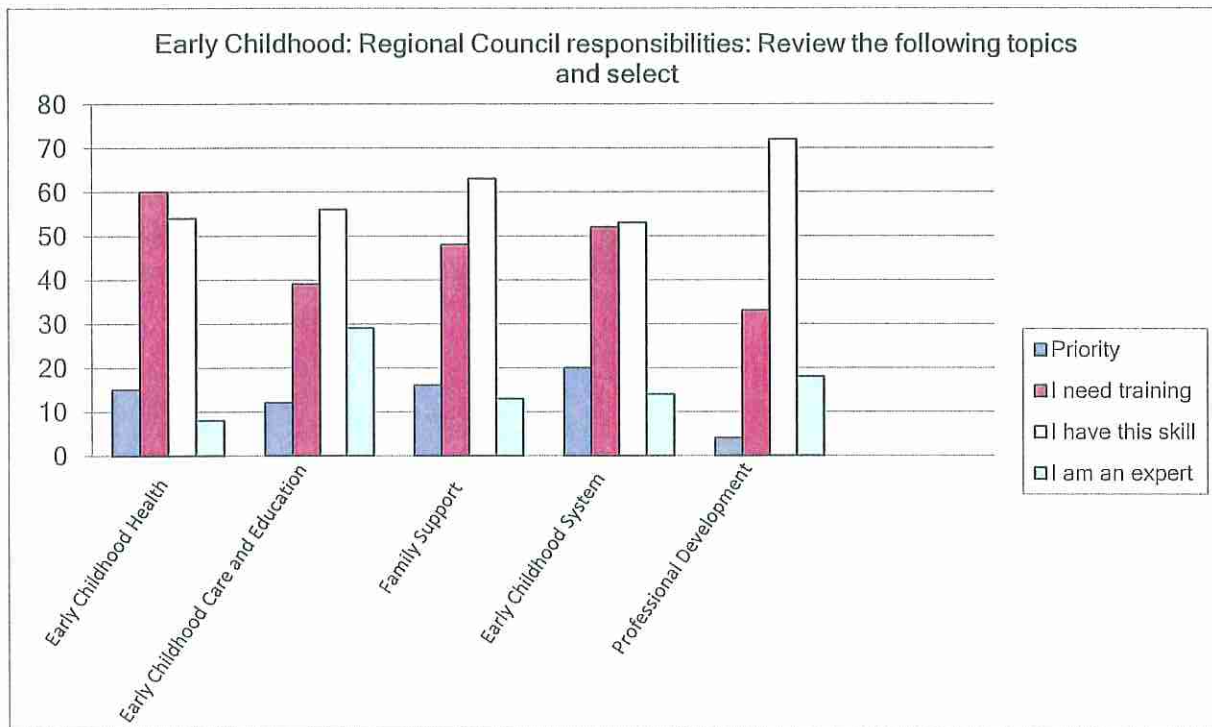
**Question 10: Communications**

Respondents felt that training around the topic of influencing was the most needed of all the communications topic areas and the one with the most priority.



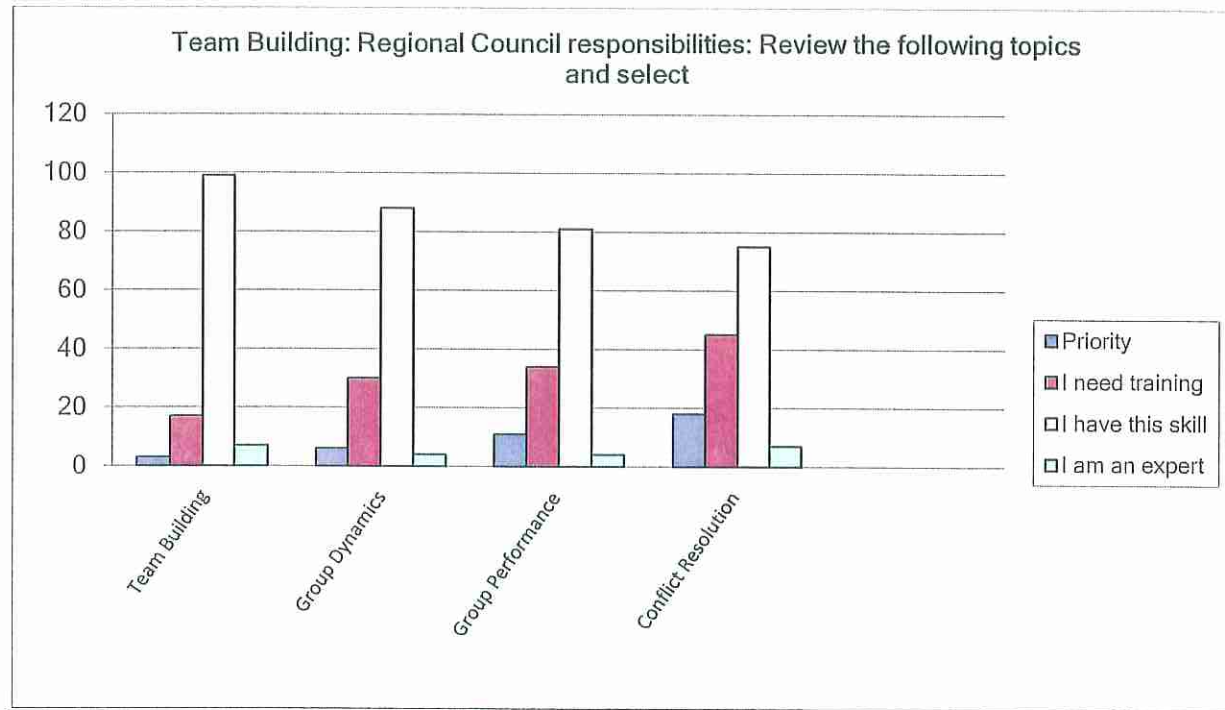
### Question 11: Early Childhood

Related to the five areas of early childhood subject matter in the survey, there was a fairly balanced distribution of respondents who felt that they needed training in each of training topics. Fifty percent of respondents felt they needed training in **Early Childhood Health**, and forty-three percent said they needed training in the **Early Childhood System**. Comments reflected that many Regional Council Members would like additional training in all Early Childhood areas even if they are an expert in the field. Having periodic training on specific areas as a base of understanding and as a refresher, as well as updates on the latest research and findings were common comments.



### Question 12: Team Building

**Conflict Resolution** was selected as the most needed training related to working with a team as reported by 36% of the respondents. Group Performance and Group Dynamics was also had a level of interest for training as reported by members, 28.1% and 24.4% respectively.



### WHAT REGIONAL COUNCILS NEED TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE

To better assist Regional Council members in being more effective, the following professional development options and topics were mentioned throughout the comments provided by members:

- Boardmanship training
- Evidence-based practice
- Statewide assessment and outcomes
- Funding Plans
- Information sharing on what is working regarding strategies
- Sharing knowledge of early childhood issues
- New member orientation
- New information from other states
- Tribal grant process and reporting
- Community development.